

# Remembering veterans

## The Waterloo Record

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The sad truth is that with each passing week there are fewer and fewer Canadians who participated in either of the world wars fought in the 20th century.

Among younger Canadians – those who, fortunately, never had to participate in anything like the First and Second World Wars – there is a desire to recognize and honour the sacrifices of the men and women who fought in them. The question is, how do we accomplish that goal? What can our governments and organizations do to help younger Canadians know more about the war veterans?

The Dominion Institute in Toronto has offered a thoughtful answer to that question. It has suggested that the government arrange a state funeral when the last Canadian veteran from the First World War dies. There are only three who are living: Percy Wilson, who is 105, and Lloyd Clemett and John Babcock, who are both 106. The institute has set up an online petition at [www.dominion.ca/statefuneral](http://www.dominion.ca/statefuneral) to gather support for its proposal.

State funerals are usually reserved for national leaders and royalty, but the idea of such a funeral for the last First World War veteran would properly acknowledge the end of an era. It would add a human element to an era that is slipping into history books.

A state funeral for the last soldier would provide a forum to honour all 619,636 Canadians who put on uniforms between 1914 and 1918, 66,655 of whom died. This is an idea that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government should consider.

Locally, a sculpture by Kitchener artist Timothy Schmalz was unveiled on the weekend to honour veterans of all wars in which Canadians participated. It is at Veterans Green on University Avenue near Wilfrid Laurier University. It, along with numerous other monuments across the country, will help to preserve the past.

The point is not to dwell endlessly on gloomy war times but to draw inspiration from the ordeals the men and women in the services faced and overcame.